



# Ontario

Ontario Farm Products  
Marketing Commission

## Newsletter

June 2005 – Issue #118

## Commission Tour Provides Experience Under Glass

*Keeping in touch with your industry often means hitting the road to talk to your clients in their own backyard. That is the driving force behind the Commission's commitment to take its business out of the boardroom and on to a tour bus.*

In late April, after a day of planting corn, Greg DeVries met the Farm Products Marketing Commission at his newest venture, a greenhouse pepper operation. His year-old facility had just expanded, bringing the operation to eight acres with the mechanical engineering in place for the next expansion ... when it is needed.

Some significant trends are developing in Ontario's thriving greenhouse vegetable industry. Mr. DeVries' investment signals the entrance of a new group of producers who see the opportunities this agriculture sector can offer. At the same time, Kent County is starting to see an increase in building permits as the industry expands beyond its

Leamington-Kingsville base of operations. According to DeVries, "all of Kent's greenhouses have gone up in the last two years."

Another significant change is signaled by the recent decision of greenhouse pepper growers to seek inclusion in the regulations under which tomato and cucumber growers are organized. In the April issue of this newsletter, greenhouse pepper grower, Dean Tiessen said,



*Dave Lugtigheld, greenhouse manager, speaks to Commission tour in new Kent County greenhouse owned by the DeVries family.*

"Market demand for greenhouse peppers is growing rapidly. Our members' needs have, as a result, outgrown an organization run by volunteers."

The Farm Products Marketing Commission spent two days touring greenhouse operations in April. According to Commission Chair, Dave Hope, "Nothing beats a firsthand look and an

*continued on page 2*

### In This Issue

|                                                 |   |
|-------------------------------------------------|---|
| Commission Tour Provides Experience Under Glass | 1 |
| OFPMC Business File                             | 3 |
| Upcoming Annual Meetings and Conventions        | 4 |

# Commission Tour Provides Experience Under Glass

*continued from page 1*

opportunity to meet growers at their operations.” For Commission members with diverse backgrounds, an industry tour provides a valuable context for issues and strategies. It’s a dimension not available in a boardroom.

There were three stops on the greenhouse vegetable tour: Greg DeVries’ pepper operation in Kent County; Nick D. Mastronardi’s tomato and pepper greenhouses; and James Cornies’ cucumber greenhouse. Despite a dependency on exporting; a critical minute-to-minute reliance on water; labour intensive farming practices; high fuel costs and significant capital requirements, the boom in this sector is measured in glass – acres and

acres of it. Ontario has, reportedly, the largest cluster of greenhouses in North America, while the world stage is dominated by the Netherlands.

The Commission toured the Double Diamond tomato and pepper greenhouses, but the Mastronardi family also has a cucumber greenhouse. Their strategy centers on being able to pack a complete range of what customers want and distribute it under their own brand.

Mr. James Cornies of Cornies Farms has 15 acres under glass and specializes in cucumber production. While his grandfather built the family’s first greenhouse in 1947, Cornies says a lot has changed in the high-tech world of growing under glass. “Nowadays, there is no time off. My dad used to shut the operation down in the middle of summer and start up again in the winter. You couldn’t do that today. I will run three crops through my greenhouses this year and when the crop is out, I’m racing to get the new one in. As well, I run research plots to experiment with different varieties.”

Mr. Jean Laprise is currently the Chair of the Tomato Seedling Growers’ Marketing Board. His business, just outside Chatham, is focused on seedlings ranging from tomatoes to onions and broccoli. Laprise is innovative in his approach to agriculture. The Commission saw his efforts to develop a line of organically-raised tomato seedlings which will be directed to a specialty niche.

While not involved in final processing, Laprise has invested in a freezing and packing premises. The 21,000 square feet facility has hydro-cooling capacity which prepares vegetables for shipping to vegetable processors. He says a major impetus for his new operation is the processing industry’s desire to be able to get large quantities of vegetables “delivered when they want them with just one phone call.”

*continued on page 4*

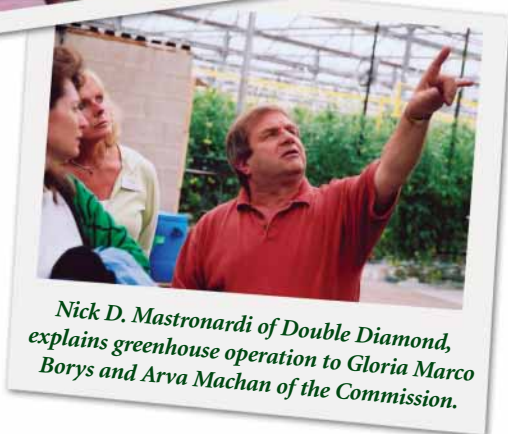


*New Commission member, Tom Richardson, with James Cornies, owner of Cornies Farms and an elected director with Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers. (L to R)*

*Greenhouse pepper grower, Charlie DeVries with Commission member, Fred Lewis (L to R)*



*Tomato Seedling Growers’ Chair, Jean Laprise, in his seedling operation near Chatham.*



*Nick D. Mastronardi of Double Diamond, explains greenhouse operation to Gloria Marco Borys and Arva Machan of the Commission.*

## OFPMC Business File

### Chicken Allocation

The Commission met with representatives of Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the Association of Ontario Chicken Processors and Ontario Independent Poultry Processors to discuss the agreement in principle which the organizations have reached and their plans for a broader consultation involving upstream and downstream stakeholders.

### Vegetable and Soybean Agreements

Annually Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers negotiates agreements with processors for thirteen vegetable crops ranging from tomatoes and sweet corn to peppers, cucumbers and green beans. After negotiation and arbitration if necessary, the Commission must

make an Order to bring the agreements and awards into force. The Commission recently dealt with 35 such Orders.

Similarly, the Commission made an Order to bring into force the new agreement negotiated between Ontario Soybean Growers, grain dealers and soybean processors.

### Beverage Alcohol System Review

The Ontario government established an independent review panel in the spring of 2005 to review the various regulations and policies which govern the beverage alcohol industry in the province. Industry stakeholders, including Grape Growers of Ontario and Wine Council of Ontario, have made presentations to the panel. The resulting report to the government is expected as early as June 2005.

### New General Manager



Dairy Farmers of Ontario promoted long-time staff member, Peter Gould, to take over responsibilities as

General Manager, following the retirement of Bob Bishop.

Mr. Gould has been with the board since 1981. Prior to his new appointment, he was the Director of Regulatory Compliance as well as the Director of Marketing and Production. He has a masters degree in economics and grew up on a family farm in Wentworth County. ■

## Communications Workshop

Communicating effectively with media and your members was the focus of a hands-on workshop offered by the Commission in April. The workshop broke the communication process into steps that any spokesperson could apply with success and increased confidence.

This workshop will be offered again in February 2005. Watch for details in a future newsletter. ■



*Dave Nodwell of the Poultry Industry Council took part in a recent Media and Communications Workshop put on the Commission.*



*Christina Lewis of the Ontario Dairy Council confers with Tom Beischlag from Chicken Farmers of Ontario during the same workshop.*

## Commission Tour Provides Experience Under Glass *continued from page 2*

Laprise finds this side of the business also helps him sell more transplants to growers.

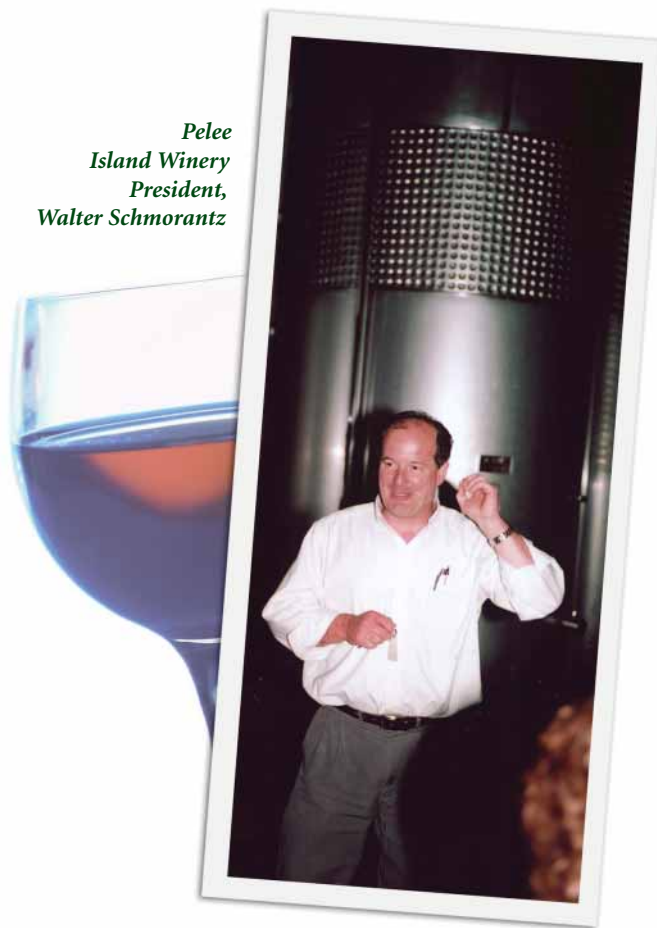
Laprise is also a survivor. He knows his seedling operation depends on being able to deliver proper quality at the right time. He told the Commission he had 36 competitors in 1987. Since then he has seen 16 close.

The Commission's last stop was Pelee Island Winery where president and wine master, Mr. Walter Schmorantz, provided an inside look at one of Ontario's most successful estate wineries. The winery has extensive vineyards located on Pelee Island. With 550 acres there plus buying grapes from five more local growers and three from Niagara, the winery produces 50,000 cases of wine annually.

With many listings on the shelves of LCBOs, Mr. Schmorantz described the company's strategy of displaying local flora and fauna on the labels of many of its wines. The successful graphics, while helping consumers readily identify the bottle they are looking for, have also led to some comical misunderstandings. A common one involves the Gewurztraminer label displaying a cactus and usually plays out like this: "How many cactus does it take to make this kind of wine?"

The Commission is appreciative to all the agri-businesses who opened their doors to provide a firsthand look at their operations. ■

*Pelee  
Island Winery  
President,  
Walter Schmorantz*



### Upcoming Annual Meetings and Conventions 2005

| Date       | Organization                                                            | Location      | Contact info   |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| June 12-14 | Ontario Dairy Council - Convention 2005                                 | Niagara Falls | (905) 542-3620 |
| June 20-21 | Ontario Agri Business Association - Grain Conference                    | Huntsville    | (519) 822-3004 |
| July 7     | Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board<br>- Annual Meeting | Aylmer        | (519) 842-3661 |
| August 30  | Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board - Annual Meeting               | Stratford     | (519) 767-6537 |

*This information is provided strictly for our readers' convenience. Please note that organizations may restrict attendance to some or all of their agenda items. Please contact each organization for more information on programs, agenda items open to non-members, and location. While the Commission endeavours to ensure this information is correct, readers are responsible for confirming its accuracy with individual organizations before making any plans to attend.* ■

#### Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission

1 Stone Rd. W., 5th Floor, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 4Y2 Tel: (519) 826-3404

For more information about this newsletter please email us at [graham.howe@omaf.gov.on.ca](mailto:graham.howe@omaf.gov.on.ca)

This newsletter is available on our website <[www.gov.on.ca/OMAF/english/farmproducts/index.html](http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAF/english/farmproducts/index.html)>

